United Nations CCPR/C/COL/CO/7/Add.1

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

Distr.: General
7 March 2018
English
Original: Spanish
English and Spanish only

Human Rights Committee

Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of Colombia

Addendum

Information received from Colombia on follow-up to the concluding observations*

[Date received: 18 December 2017]

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

GE.18-03531 (E) 170518 180518

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I. Internal armed conflict

Recommendations contained in paragraph 9

"9. The State party should continue and intensify its efforts to prevent violations of Covenant rights and to give effect to the rights of victims of the armed conflict to truth, justice and full reparation. It should, in particular, ensure that:

(a) The appropriate authorities adopt effective preventive measures in response to early warnings issued by the Inter-Agency Early Warning Committee and that they monitor and take proper action on all risk reports and follow-up notes issued by the Ombudsman's Office under the Early Warning System even if they are not converted into early warnings;

(b) All violations of Covenant rights are investigated promptly, thoroughly and impartially, and the perpetrators of such violations are brought to justice and held accountable for their acts;

(c) Effective protection and care is afforded to the most vulnerable persons and communities, in particular women, children, older adults, persons with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons, Afro-Colombians and indigenous peoples;

(d) All victims receive full reparation, including the restitution of their land."

1. Effective preventive measures in response to early warnings issued by the Inter-Agency Early Warning Committee

1. The Ombudsman's Office is continuing to strengthen its capacity to assess the level of institutional mobilization in response to the situations of risk that it identifies. In 2016, the Office made progress in adapting the system for collecting, processing and assessing the information provided by the competent authorities in connection with the adoption of preventive and protective measures, with the aim of evaluating the action taken.

2. The Office prepared 64 preliminary assessments of the State response, conducted joint fact-finding missions in the field with regional analysts and issued final evaluations of the State response in the Departments of Valle del Cauca, Nariño, Huila, Córdoba, Bolívar and Atlántico.

3. The Ministry of the Interior acts as the technical secretariat for the Inter-Agency Early Warning Committee[1] and makes recommendations to the competent authorities in order to prevent large-scale violations of human rights and breaches of international humanitarian law. It does so in all cases, irrespective of whether or not early warnings are issued and of whether those that are issued are maintained or lifted. The response to the recommendations is followed up on the basis of information received from the relevant authorities or entities, ongoing communication with them and information provided at the meetings held by the Committee both in Bogotá and in the field.

4. In 2016, the Early Warning System issued 13 risk reports and 18 follow-up notes, which were assessed by the Inter-Agency Early Warning Committee with input from the authorities responsible for the territories concerned.

5. Of the 31 reports and notes assessed, 28 resulted in a decision to issue an early warning. However, as noted above, in all 31 cases recommendations were made to the

[1] The Inter-Agency Early Warning Committee was established by Decree No. 2890 of 2013. The Committee makes recommendations to the Minister of the Interior regarding whether or not an early warning should be issued and to the competent authorities regarding the implementation of measures to prevent violations of the rights to life and to integrity, liberty and security of person and breaches of international humanitarian law. The recommendations are made on the basis of the risk reports and follow-up notes issued by the Ombudsman's Office and requests received by the technical secretariat of the Committee.

national, departmental and municipal authorities, with a view to preventing and mitigating the risks identified. These risk reports and follow-up notes relate to 19 departments and 79 municipalities.

6. In addition, 34 training sessions were run in the field for local authorities and security forces. Follow-up sessions on the implementation of recommendations were run in 15 departments, where risk reports or follow-up notes were in effect for 80 municipalities.

7. In 2016, the Committee held reassessment meetings in 12 departments to review warnings issued by the Early Warning System for 19 municipalities. In all cases, it was decided that the early warnings should remain in place.

8. Moreover, the Committee issued further recommendations regarding all of the risk reports and follow-up notes reviewed on the ground, urging the authorities either to continue the activities they had been implementing since the first evaluation or to consider new situations of risk identified as a result of unforeseen events occurring after the Early Warning System of the Ombudsman's Office had issued the risk report or follow-up note.

9. In 2016, the Early Warning System of the Ombudsman's Office issued a total of 30 imminent risk reports for 15 departments and 58 municipalities. The technical secretariat sent those reports to the competent authorities, together with reports on risks or threats specific to particular population groups, so that the necessary steps could be taken to address them.

2. Investigations of violations of Covenant rights

A. Progress made in investigating members of criminal organizations and public servants involved in human rights violations

10. In 2016 and thus far in 2017, a total of 52 judgments have been handed down in respect of 215 candidates for reduced sentences under the Justice and Peace Act, in relation to 6,004 offences involving 28,055 victims.

11. In 2017, the authorities will arraign candidates for reduced sentences under the Justice and Peace Act who are connected with the area under the command of Salvatore Mancuso (11,046 offences and 29,945 victims), the Central Bolívar Bloc (2,188 offences and 3,846 victims), Llanos Orientales (1,200 offences and 3,056 victims), the Calima, Bananero and Mineros Blocs (2,950 offences and 3,808 victims), the campesino self-defence forces of Magdalena Medio and the campesino self-defence forces of Puerto Boyacá (2,002 offences and 4,745 victims), and Antioquia and Chocó (3,088 offences and 3,998 victims).

12. In 2016 and thus far in 2017, progress has also been made in investigating human rights violations committed by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), FARC dissident groups and the National Liberation Army (ELN). In 2016, 233 members of FARC, FARC dissident groups and ELN were convicted; in 2017, there have been 69 convictions.

13. The following table presents the results of the proceedings in cases involving these illegal organizations.

Group	*2016*	*2017*
FARC	Investigated: 1 567	Investigated: 249
ELN and dissident groups	Prosecuted: 307	Prosecuted: 72
	Convicted: 233	Convicted: 69

Group	*2016*	*2017*
Type A and Type B organizations[2]	Investigated: 2 360	Investigated: 937
	Prosecuted: 2 135	Prosecuted: 800
	Convicted: 1 660	Convicted: 677

14. Over the same period, progress has been made in investigating human rights violations possibly involving public servants.[3] Under Act No. 600 of 2000, 58 convictions were handed down in 2016 and 1,124 in 2017.

15. The table below shows the progress made in these investigations.

Act No. 600 of 2000

Action taken	*2016*	*2017*
Institution of pretrial proceedings	141	9 193
Convictions	58	1 124

Act No. 906 of 2004

Action taken	*Cases opened*	*Charges brought*
Charged	614	262
Convicted and sentenced	327	118

16. The information on public servants under investigation includes cases involving members of the security forces which had been identified as "false positives" by sources outside the Prosecution Service. The table below shows data on the investigations carried out by the Attorney General's Office on such cases, which date back to 1984.

Act No. 600 of 2000

Action taken	*2016*	*2017*
Definition of legal status	142	103
Convictions	77	63

Act No. 906 of 2004

Action taken	*2016*	*2017*
Indictments	59	12
Convictions	8	2

3. Protection and care for the most vulnerable persons and communities

17. Colombia has a robust programme to protect groups of human rights defenders, including trade union leaders and activists, victims, campesinos, civil society organizations, land claimants, journalists, watchdogs and others. The programme is managed by the National Protection Unit.

[2] Type A. Organized armed groups: organizations with the largest territorial presence and the greatest military, economic and logistical capacity, and links with international organizations. Type B. Organized criminal groups: organizations with regional influence and transnational reach, specializing in the commission of certain offences and the "provision" of such "services" to other organizations.

[3] Cases possibly related to the armed conflict and in which at least one suspect is a public servant.

18. Between 1 January and 30 March 2017, the National Protection Unit conducted 1,361 risk assessments, 533 of which were identified as involving "routine risk", 823 as involving "extraordinary risk" and 5 as involving "extreme risk". As of July 2017, protective measures were in place for 6,067 persons in order to safeguard their right to life and to integrity and security of person. The Unit currently has an annual budget of over US$ 150 million for this work.

19. As at 31 July 2017, the Protection and Assistance Programme within the Attorney General's Office was handling 525 cases involving a total of 1,654 protected persons. Between 1 January and 31 July 2017, the Programme took on 230 new cases involving 819 beneficiaries; 134 of those cases are no longer covered by the Programme because the beneficiaries have withdrawn or their agreement with the Programme has been terminated or has run its course.

4. Measures taken to provide assistance and full reparation to victims of the armed conflict

20. The Human Rights Committee is aware of the efforts made by Colombia following the adoption of Act No. 1448 of 2011, which lays down measures for the provision of support, assistance and full reparation to victims of the internal armed conflict. The Victims and Land Restitution Act is highly regarded in many quarters, since it demonstrates the State's commitment to upholding victims' right to full reparation. The reparation process is unparalleled in that it began while the armed conflict was still ongoing.

21. The information below includes details on the progress achieved in 2016 by the National System of Comprehensive Victim Support and Reparation in connection with the provision of support and assistance, the Central Register of Victims, full reparation, remembrance and truth, and land restitution.

A. Provision of support and assistance

22. The aim of the support and assistance component of the Public Policy for the Victims of the Internal Armed Conflict is to mitigate the impact and direct ramifications of the offences covered by the Victims and Land Restitution Act.

23. The Victims Unit now allocates humanitarian assistance on the basis of a needs assessment procedure for determining whether households that apply for humanitarian assistance actually require it. Under this new procedure, it was found that almost 40 per cent of the beneficiary households can now meet their own minimum subsistence needs; as a result, they are no longer in receipt of humanitarian aid, and resources are now more focused on supporting the most vulnerable households.

24. As at 31 December 2016, a total of 1,157,452 households had applied for humanitarian assistance. Of those, 724,425 were households that had suffered forced displacement and had been identified as lacking in some aspect of their minimum subsistence needs and requiring humanitarian assistance payments. The remaining 433,027 households were not identified as lacking in any aspect of their minimum subsistence needs and were therefore deemed to be no longer eligible for humanitarian assistance.

25. Of the 724,425 eligible households, 673,710 received at least one humanitarian assistance payment in 2016. In all, 1,051,232 payments were made, for a total investment of US$ 201.9 million, putting the country 93 per cent of the way towards reaching its humanitarian assistance target for the year. The remaining 50,715 households that submitted their applications in 2016 received assistance in 2017.

26. The total budget allocated to the Victims Unit for this component in 2017 amounts to approximately US$ 204 million.

B. Central Register of Victims

27. As the Committee is already aware, the Central Register of Victims contributes to the recognition and identification of individuals and groups requiring assistance and

reparations, since the registration of a case entails official acknowledgement of the harm caused by armed groups and of the victims' entitlement to assistance and reparations. Moreover, the statements made by victims provide the authorities with first-hand information about when, where and how offences were committed and reveal changes in the geographical scope of the conflict, thereby supplying details which are critical for establishing the truth.

28. As at 31 July 2017, the Register includes 8,504,127 persons identified as victims within the meaning of article 3 of Act No. 1448 of 2011. Of these, 6,646,456 are eligible for assistance and reparations. The table below provides a breakdown of the figures.

Number of victims of the offences covered by the Victims and Land Restitution Act

Offence	*Number of people*
Forced abandonment or dispossession of land	5 325
Terrorist acts/attacks/fighting/harassment	95 860
Threats	353 513
Crimes against sexual freedom and integrity	20 673
Enforced disappearance	166 970
Displacement	7 219 471
Homicide	987 108
Landmines/unexploded ordnance/explosive devices	11 047
Loss of movable or immovable property	110 832
Abduction	35 674
No information	47
Torture	10 376
Recruitment of children or adolescents	8 250

Breakdown of cases by offence

Offence	*Number of cases*
Abandonment of land	5 915
Threats	373 065
Enforced disappearance	177 395
No information	47
Landmines	11 743
Displacement	7 219 471
Homicide	1 071 521
Abduction	37 032
Loss of movable or immovable property	120 202
Recruitment of children or adolescents	9 169
Torture	10 498
Displacement	7 901 950
Offences against sexual integrity	21 432
Terrorist acts	102 836
Total	9 842 805

C. Full reparation

29. In line with the Victims and Land Restitution Act, the Government is making progress in the provision of five forms of individual and collective reparation: satisfaction, rehabilitation, compensation, restitution and guarantees of non-repetition. The purpose of

each action is to ensure that victims of the armed conflict effectively enjoy their rights and are able to rebuild their lives. A number of aspects of full reparation are highlighted below.

Individual reparation

30. As of December 2016, 640,000 comprehensive reparation, care and assistance plans had been developed. The plans are a means of profiling the victims, identifying their needs and, on that basis, offering them the appropriate plans, programmes and projects from among those available through the Victims Unit.

31. A total of 262,881 persons have received support through the psychosocial and integrated health-care programme for victims.

32. A total of 30,000 individual victims received support under the Group Emotional Recovery Strategy in 2016. The conceptual and methodological focus of the Strategy is on helping victims of the armed conflict to recognize, process and come to terms with the harm and suffering they have experienced.

33. As of December 2016, the Victims Unit had paid compensation totalling US$ 157 million to 23,845 direct victims since the entry into force of Act No. 1448 of 2011. In 2016 alone, 2,035 persons received compensation.

34. In 2016, 24,404 payments totalling US$ 33 million were made to children and adolescents by way of administrative compensation. The money is paid into a trust in their name and transferred to them when they reach the age of majority.

35. Between 1 January and 31 December 2016, the Victims' Reparation Fund provided 593 victims with compensation totalling US$ 4.5 million, of which US$ 626,000 (13.86 per cent) consisted of funds contributed by candidates for reduced sentences under the Justice and Peace Act or returns on such funds. The Government contributed US$ 54 million (1.19 per cent) from the Fund for Rehabilitation, Social Investment and Combating Organized Crime towards reparations for victims recognized in rulings handed down under the Justice and Peace Act. In fulfilment of its subsidiary responsibility for financing reparations for victims, the State also contributed US$ 3.8 million (84.95 per cent) from the national budget.

Collective reparation

36. By the end of December 2016, the Collective Reparation Programme operated by the Victims Unit had approved 104 comprehensive collective reparation plans and had provided measures of community rehabilitation, satisfaction, restitution, compensation and/or guarantees of non-repetition to 121 groups.

37. Of the 121 groups in receipt of at least two forms of reparation, at the end of 2016, 87 were receiving psychosocial rehabilitation through the "Interweaving" strategy.

38. In 2016, the measures contained in the comprehensive collective reparation plans were incorporated into municipal development plans and local action plans. Resources were then allocated for the implementation of measures of reparation. As a result, 57 recipients of collective reparations will receive their benefits under local development plans.

39. In 2016, the Government made progress in the implementation of the "Interweaving" strategy for 150 recipients of collective reparations.

D. Remembrance and truth

40. Within the framework of the Public Policy for Support and Full Reparations for Victims, the historical remembrance and truth components have a transformational effect on a society that is attempting to reframe violent events and understand that learning the truth about the past constitutes a form of reparation for victims of the conflict and a form of reconciliation for the country as a whole. The Government has continually sought to strengthen the processes of reconstructing the memory of and ascertaining the truth about the internal armed conflict in Colombia. It has designed a series of strategies aimed at:

- Establishing and operating the Human Rights and Historical Remembrance Archive as a contribution to the right to truth and the prevention of impunity;
- Conducting investigations to identify the events, people and conditions that led to the armed conflict in Colombia;
- Designing and building the National Museum of Remembrance to honour the victims and promote a culture of respect for human rights;
- Promoting local initiatives to reconstruct memory based on the acknowledgement of the various accounts of the armed conflict;
- Strengthening non-judicial mechanisms for enabling former combatants and other actors to contribute to the truth.

Remembrance initiatives (25)

Department	*Initiative(s)*
Caquetá	Caquetá Centre for the Documentation of Violence
	FUNAMU Cultural School for Peace: Space for remembrance
	"Dialogue, from pain to hope" Gallery
	Culture on the Move
	Children's Audiovisual School, Belén de los Andaquíes
	"Diverse Traffic" radio series
	Fragments of memory: Tribute to Blanca Gálviz
	Mambe Foundation
	"Trees of life and love" Gallery
	Searching for the land
Casanare	Remembrance for creation and non-repetition
Cauca	Centre for reflection
	Reconstruction of the Tacueyó (Ricardo Franco), Gualanday, Sebastián UL and San Pedro massacres
Cesar	Whispered Dreams
Meta	Remembrance-building programme
Nariño	Hildegard María Feldmann and José Luis Melo Espinosa Mobile School: Remembrance, reconciliation and land
	Remembrance mural
	Nuestra Señora del Rosario de las Lajas Waterfall
Norte de Santander	Teacher training on remembrance
Valle del Cauca	Victims' Chapel
	Men and Women of Triana
	Urban Faces
	Mothers of the Punta del Este 12
	Remembrance Gallery
	Stilt houses

E. Progress made in land restitution

41. Following the adoption of Act No. 1448 of 2011 and Decree-Laws Nos. 4829, 4633, 4634 and 4635 of 2011, the Public Policy on Land Restitution was developed as a tool for enabling victims of the internal armed conflict to reclaim their rights.

42. Since then, the challenge facing the Government has been to implement a flexible, expeditious and effective procedure, as required under the Act, to restore land and provide land titles to victims or ethnic communities who were dispossessed of their lands or forced to abandon them. The process is intended to provide an efficient and lasting solution to the difficulties associated with the loss of property by returning land to its rightful owners, offering them legal certainty and procedural safeguards while improving socioeconomic conditions for them and their families.

43. The Public Policy on Land Restitution has been implemented gradually and progressively in rural areas, taking into account the security situation, the historical scale of dispossession and the existence of conditions conducive to the return of the campesinos affected.

44. Land restitution is the fruit of the State's efforts to rethink its strategy, consolidate a policy to address forced displacement in an effective and comprehensive manner and provide comprehensive redress to victims, in line with international human rights law and the principles of transitional justice.

45. **Registration requests.** As at 28 July 2017, 106,833 applications for inclusion in the Registry of Expropriated or Forcibly Abandoned Land had been submitted by 71,509 owners in connection with 92,395 properties.

46. **Administrative phase.** The Ministry of Defence has screened in 64,882 applications (61 per cent of the total). Of the 49,210 cases that have been processed, 19,822 have been approved and added to the Registry and 29,388 have been rejected; 13,855 of the approved applications are being examined by the courts.

47. These actions demonstrate that a concrete plan has been developed as part of a policy designed to ensure the effective enjoyment of rights. The real and tangible progress that has been made in this connection attests to the suitability of the process and its level of organization and represents a milestone in the processing of applications for inclusion in the Registry. The large volume of applications that have been processed shows that the aim of ensuring the effective enjoyment of rights is being met, as the rights of thousands of victims have been upheld and protected by means of administrative and judicial procedures.

48. **Judicial phase.** Of the 19,822 cases included in the Registry, 13,909 are being considered by land restitution judges, who have already issued 2,727 rulings on 5,518 applications. As a result, the courts have recognized 28,993 beneficiaries, to whom they have restored title to 218,196 hectares plus 4,073 m^2 of land. Of the households with a restitution order, 84 per cent have actual enjoyment of their land, understood as the verifiable fact of living on the land, making use of it or having returned to work it.

49. As a complement to the legal and material restitution of land, the judicial process can also order other actions as part of the ongoing application of the Policy on Land Restitution. These actions include the implementation of rural production projects, priority access to housing from the Banco Agrario (a land development bank) or the Ministry of Housing, relief from public utility or financial arrears, compensation for victims and non-culpable third parties who acted in good faith, services for secondary occupants, administration of agro-industrial production projects and payment of legal costs.

50. For example, as of July 2017, equivalent property totalling 163.7 hectares and valued at approximately US$ 1.7 million has been provided in connection with 63 compensation orders awarded to victims. Similarly, 126 victims have received monetary compensation totalling almost US$ 3.8 million. Property valued at US$ 594,000 has been purchased in connection with a further 11 compensation orders.

51. Additionally, 33 third parties who acted in good faith have received monetary compensation of almost US$ 1.2 million. In 83 cases the courts have ordered that such

parties should retain ownership of land for which a restitution application had been filed; the total value of such land is approximately US$ 2.6 million.

52. In the area of debt relief, 1,687 families have received payments of approximately US$ 141,000, and a further US$ 477,000 in debt has been cancelled. In the area of property tax relief, 2,281 families have benefited from the cancellation of US$ 1.1 million in arrears and exemption from US$ 128,000. Lastly, 1,650 families have benefited from relief on public utility arrears.

53. With regard to secondary occupants, 46 orders have been implemented. Of these, 2 involved the implementation of a production project, 23 allowed the secondary occupant to retain ownership of land for which a restitution application had been filed and 16 involved cash payments.

54. Within the framework of the Production Projects Programme operated by the Land Restitution Unit, as of July 2017 a total of 3,361 families had been identified as beneficiaries. Of those, 2,730 have been given incentives totalling US$ 22.1 million, and the other 631 are in the process of project formulation and review of criteria. Of the projects implemented, 59 per cent focus on livestock and 41 per cent on agriculture, bringing new crops and production systems to territories and large areas of land.

55. **Restitution of lands to ethnic communities.** Land restitution judges and magistrates have issued six judgments restoring territorial rights to the following communities: Andágueda Reserve (Chocó); Renacer Negro Community Council (Cauca); Nuevo Espinal Wayuu Settlement (La Guajira); Menkue, Misaya y La Pista Yukpa Reserve (Cesar); Eyákera — Dogibi Emberá Reserve (Chocó); and Iroka Reserve (Cesar). The judgments have benefited more than 3,000 families.

56. The six judgments ordered the restitution of 135,714 hectares plus 7,208 m^2 of land.

57. Currently, 27 applications relating to an estimated 283,556 hectares of ethnic lands have reached the judicial phase of the land restitution process.

58. Since it began operations as a preventive mechanism for cases where there is an imminent risk of violations of territorial rights, the Land Restitution Unit has succeeded in securing 25 judicial rulings ordering precautionary measures, which are interim measures of judicial protection intended to halt or prevent current or future violations of territorial rights on land affected by the internal armed conflict. Of these rulings, 15 related to indigenous communities, protecting 7,428 families and 2,089,077 hectares, while 9 related to Afro-Colombian communities, protecting 7,323 families and 411,328 hectares. The remaining ruling related collectively to 41 ethnic territories (26 reserves and 15 community councils), protecting a total of 712,033 hectares and 7,470 families.

II. Conditions of detention

Recommendation contained in paragraph 29

"29. The State party should redouble its efforts to reduce overcrowding by, inter alia, ensuring that use is made of non-custodial measures, and to improve prison conditions so as to ensure that the dignity of persons deprived of their liberty is respected in accordance with article 10 of the Covenant. It should also step up its efforts to prevent torture and ill-treatment in places of deprivation of liberty, to ensure that all reports of torture or ill-treatment are investigated promptly, thoroughly and impartially by an independent body that has no hierarchical or institutional tie to the suspected perpetrators and to ensure that the responsible parties are brought to justice and punished."

59. Mindful of the difficulties caused by overcrowding in some detention centres, the Government has taken steps to reduce prison occupancy that go beyond quantitative aspects and are geared towards mitigating and correcting the structural problem affecting the prison system. Accordingly, it has adopted a comprehensive vision of the three phases of criminal justice policy: first, the identification of undesirable behaviours that call for a response by

the State; second, the investigation and prosecution phase; and third, enforcement of the penalty in the prison system.

60. The general comments of the Committee against Torture and the Human Rights Committee have provided the Government with guidance in its efforts to solve this problem; so too have the Constitutional Court decisions declaring an unconstitutional state of affairs, which determined that the issue should be addressed through intervention by various government bodies responsible for resolving the crisis in the prison system.

1. Current situation of persons deprived of their liberty: quantitative aspects

61. Although the problem persists, the rate of overcrowding has improved since 2016, falling from 51.2 per cent in December 2016 to 46.9 per cent in June 2017. As of June 2017, the total population of pretrial detainees and convicts in the custody of the National Prisons Institute totalled 115,628 (male and female), which was 2.4 per cent lower (2,904 fewer persons) than the December 2016 figure.

62. Pretrial detainees (35,650 individuals) accounted for 30.8 per cent of the prison population; of these, 92.1 per cent (32,842) were men and 7.9 per cent (2,808) were women. This population was divided into eight categories corresponding to the number of months spent awaiting trial. It was found that 31.6 per cent (11,278) had spent 0 to 5 months in detention, 21.5 per cent (7,659) had spent 6 to 10 months and 13.3 per cent (4,736) had spent 11 to 15 months.[4]

63. With regard to infrastructure projects undertaken in existing national prisons, between 2014 and 2015 the Prison Services Unit delivered 3,336 new or renovated prison places. It expects to deliver a total of 3,881 new places between 2016 and 2017, including three projects to extend independently run medium-security prisons, which will have sufficient decent facilities to allow for the resocialization of prisoners.

2. Use of non-custodial measures

A. Paradigm shift in public policy on prisons

64. In recent years, the Government has shifted the focus of its prison policy in accordance with the provisions of the National Development Plan 2014–2018. As a result, National Economic and Social Policy Council document No. 3828 on prison policy,[5] published on 19 May 2015, states that one of the objectives of the policy is "to refocus prison policy by coordinating it with a consistent and effective criminal justice policy".[6] The design of such a policy involves not just meeting the demand for prison places but also dealing with the inherent problems in the system and finding comprehensive solutions to them.

65. This public policy document places particular emphasis on the protection of the human rights of the prison population, focusing on issues such as "the upgrading of technology and health facilities in prisons; the improvement of support, resocialization and assistance services for persons deprived of liberty; and coordination with strategic actors in the private sector and at the local level".

66. The measures and strategies set out in the public policy document under the section on coordination of prison policy and criminal justice policy are intended to rationalize the use of custodial measures and offer solutions to the problems faced by persons in pretrial detention. Another of the objectives of this component of the policy is to improve resocialization programmes and the efficiency of the prisoner rehabilitation system in general.

[4] National Prisons Institute statistical bulletin No. 6 of June 2017.

[5] https://colaboracion.dnp.gov.co/CDT/Conpes/Econ%C3%B3micos/Pol%C3%ADtica%20penitenciaria%20y%20carcelaria.pdf.

[6] Ibid., p. 3.

67. The following are the legislative initiatives formulated in keeping with a broad understanding of comprehensive criminal justice policy that have an impact on the prison system:

(i) **Act No. 1709 of 2014**, whereby the Prison Code was updated and a number of guarantees for persons deprived of their liberty were strengthened, for example in respect of access to benefits and mechanisms that provide alternatives to imprisonment, such as suspended sentences, parole and house arrest. Under the Act, prisoners can also obtain sentence reductions for the time they spend working, studying or participating in training activities. This benefit is now considered a right rather than an option that is left to the discretion of the judicial authorities. This in turn strengthens the principle that the aim of the sentence is social rehabilitation.

(ii) **Act No. 1760 of 2015 and Act No. 1786 of 2016**, whose purpose is to rationalize and restrict the use of pretrial detention by limiting its duration and setting forth the conditions in which a fundamental right such as liberty may be restricted; the temporary nature of pretrial detention; the principles of the presumption of innocence, legality, proportionality and necessity and the fundamental rights to liberty and to due process without unjustified delay; the definition of when a detainee is entitled to be released as a result of inaction on the part of the State; and rules, stages and prosecutorial discretion in relation to criminal procedure.

68. Act No. 1786 provides that the Ministry of Justice and Law, the Attorney General's Office and the Judicial Council should draw up an action plan establishing whether pretrial detention measures should remain in place and improving the response capacity of the actors involved in resolving the pretrial detention problem. This work has been carried out in cooperation with the Ombudsman's Office and the National Prisons Institute.

69. In keeping with that approach, the Judicial Council reactivated some of the regional boards on the conduct of adversarial oral proceedings in criminal cases in order to comply with the provisions of Acts Nos. 1760 and 1786, expedite proceedings at the regional level[7] and decide which strategies to follow, in light of the needs of each regional or district council. The Attorney General's Office, in coordination with the Judicial Council, has devised appropriate steps for the effective completion of proceedings in which pretrial detention has been extended under one of the four scenarios set forth in the aforementioned legislation. Action in follow-up to the work of the regional boards has been taken by 15 district offices (Caldas, Pereira, Nariño, Armenia, Caquetá-Neiva, Montería, Atlántico, Bogotá, Cesar, Bolívar, La Guajira, Sucre, Tunja, Cartagena and Chocó).

70. According to information provided by the Attorney General's Office, as at 24 July 2017 there were 13,398 persons who stood to benefit from Act No. 1786 of 2016; of these, 10,550 were held in pretrial detention, 2,484 were under house arrest, and the situation of 358 had not yet been determined.

71. The Ministry of Justice and Law has stressed that release (but not the end of proceedings) is not automatic but is subject to a hearing to establish that none of the exceptions provided for by law are applicable. Acts Nos. 1760 and 1786 do not entail the immediate release of persons convicted of an offence by a court; their purpose, rather, is to uphold the principle of the presumption of innocence and ensure that persons are tried within a reasonable period of time, while offering the possibility that persons who are under criminal prosecution may remain at liberty until such time as they are convicted.

(i) **Act No. 1826 of 2017 is intended to relieve the pressure on the justice system** through a more flexible legal response to certain behaviours that represent a lesser infringement of rights protected under criminal law. To that end, a special abridged procedure was established for the differential handling of cases involving punishable acts that are less harmful. Under this procedure, the criminal proceedings may be transferred to private individuals, who may undertake investigations and bring charges relating to such cases as private prosecutors.

[7] Circular No. PCSJC17-15 of 20 April 2017.

72. The Criminal Justice Policy Council[8] has made progress in developing the National Plan for Criminal Justice Policy. In relation to the prison system, the Plan's general outline has been taken as a frame of reference for the design of the Ten-Year Plan of the Justice System, so that both of these policy documents, although different in scope, are aligned under common principles that allow for their coordination.

73. Furthermore, in 2016 a criminal justice policy information system[9] was established as an online tool that provides all citizens with access to official statistical data and information on laws relating to criminal and prison policy. This tool was developed in accordance with Constitutional Court decision T-762 of 2015, which is intended to coordinate the mission, operation and approach of the bodies that make up the Criminal Justice Policy Council. In 2017, work continued on a technological solution to address the lack of information about criminal justice policy, while further improvements were made to the criminal justice policy website to make it easier to navigate. In addition, new dashboards have been developed within the criminal justice policy information system to provide more extensive information, essentially on human rights indicators relating to the prison system and adolescents deprived of their liberty.

3. Improvement of conditions of detention

A. Measures to meet the drinking-water and other needs of persons deprived of their liberty

74. The Prison Services Unit has focused on ensuring that the supply of drinking water is as uninterrupted as possible in national prisons. In that context, significant efforts have gone into making sure that water treatment plants are operational and that they supply water to inmates.

75. In 2016, operation and maintenance contracts for drinking water collection, treatment and storage systems entered into force, notably at the prisons in Quibdó, Istmina, Apartadó, Nariño, Socorro and Neiva. In addition, prisons that have wells have had drinking water treatment systems installed.

76. Resources were allocated for the construction and maintenance of drinking water plants at 32 prisons.[10] In 2017, contracts were concluded for the operation and maintenance of water treatment plants at 18 of the 32 establishments. The remainder are supplied with drinking water by the public utilities of each municipality.

B. Medical and health care for prisoners

77. Article 66 of Act No. 1709 of 2014[11] established the National Health Fund for Persons Deprived of Their Liberty as a special account for collecting and administering the resources of the health system for persons deprived of their liberty. The Fund has a governing council[12] which has been meeting since January 2016 and is responsible for

[8] The Criminal Justice Policy Council is a collegial body that advises the Government on the implementation of State criminal justice policy. It is composed of the Minister of Justice and Law, who serves as chair, the President of the Criminal Division of the Supreme Court of Justice, the President of the Administrative Division of the Judicial Council, the Attorney General, the Minister of Education, the Counsel General, the Ombudsman, the Director-General of the National Police, the Director-General of the National Intelligence Agency, the Director-General of the National Prisons Institute, the Director-General of the Prison Services Unit, the Director-General of the Colombian Family Welfare Institute, the Director-General of the National Planning Department, and two senators and four members of the House of Representatives belonging to the First and Second Committees (i.e. one senator and two representatives chosen by each Committee). The Criminal and Prison Policy Directorate of the Ministry of Justice and Law serves as its technical secretariat.

[9] Accessible from the website www.politicacriminal.gov.co.

[10] Under inter-administrative project management contract No. 216144, concluded between the Prison Services Unit and the National Fund for Development Projects.

[11] This Act amended the Prison Code (Act No. 65 of 1993).

[12] The Fund's governing council is a "collegial body, made up of senior government officials and the manager of the fiduciary body responsible for the administration of the Fund, whose main tasks are

issuing recommendations on the contracting of health services and instructions for the implementation of the Health Care Model for Persons Deprived of Their Liberty in the Custody of the National Prisons Institute.

78. The resources available to the National Health Fund for Persons Deprived of Their Liberty are valued at US$ 27.8 million. The Prison Services Unit has made the necessary arrangements for the administration of the resources allocated to the Fund,[13] which are used to contract comprehensive health services for persons deprived of their liberty, including internal and external health services, dentistry, mental health care (psychiatric care and supply of controlled drugs), laboratory services, care of patients with HIV, medicines, high-cost medicines, health-related prevention and promotion, and authorizations for procedures. All of these services are provided internally and, where necessary, externally, with the support of the Prison Services Unit in the referral and counter-referral process.

79. Under Decree No. 2245 of 2015, the Government issued regulations on the system for the provision of health services to persons deprived of their liberty in accordance with Act No. 1709 of 2014 and the legal powers assigned to the National Prisons Institute, the Prison Services Unit, the National Health Fund for Persons Deprived of Their Liberty and other relevant bodies. In line with the above, the Health Care Model for Persons Deprived of Their Liberty in the Custody of the National Prisons Institute was adopted by the Ministry of Health in its decision No. 5159 of 2015, and is being implemented by the Prison Services Unit in cooperation with the National Prisons Institute.

80. To implement the Model, three technical-administrative manuals have been issued on the provision of health services, public health care and treatment and a mandatory quality assurance system for prisons, respectively.

81. In addition, on 5 May 2016, the governing council of the National Prisons Institute declared a state of emergency in all of the country's prisons, granting special powers to the directors of the National Prisons Institute and the Prison Services Unit to take the necessary measures to address the situation in prisons.

82. The measures taken included:

- Deployment of mobile health-care teams run jointly and in coordination with a social support network made up of the sectional health divisions of the departments, NGOs and public security forces;
- Amendment of the National Prisons Institute's operational manual to enable health-care professionals currently performing administrative tasks to carry out care-related tasks;
- Prompt execution of work to maintain, renovate and equip health-care facilities in prisons.

83. These immediate measures do not affect the development of substantive solutions, which is under way. On the contrary, they help to deal with the current situation and pave the way for the entry into force of the new health-care model.

C. Measures to ensure the provision of adequate psychiatric care in all prisons

84. Mental health services are provided in prisons. Such services include evaluation by a psychiatrist and the supply and administration of controlled drugs by a nursing assistant hired specifically for the mental health programme. Check-ups are at the specialist's discretion, taking into account the diagnosis, adherence to treatment and other aspects. Not all patients require monthly check-ups, although controlled medicines are provided on a

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the establishment of general policies for the administration and investment of the Fund resources, the allocation of these resources, their equitable distribution, and the special duty of reviewing the Fund's budget with a view to ensuring its adoption by the Government."

[13] Under contract No. 331 of 2016, concluded between the Prison Services Unit and Consorcio Fondo de Atención en Salud PPL 2017 ("Prisoner Health Care Fund Consortium 2017"), the latter became the fiduciary body responsible for administering the resources.

monthly basis to detainees with mental illnesses who are listed in the database of the mental health programme.

85. Mental health consultations are available to two categories of patients: new ones who are referred to a psychiatrist by a general practitioner, and current ones who present changes in their mental health status or for whom new forms of treatment are available. Patients are scheduled for check-ups based on the date of their last appointment.

86. The Constitutional Court's declaration of a state of emergency in the prison system was extended until 30 June 2017. The decision extending the declaration established the following lines of action: (i) strengthening promotion and prevention measures in the area of public health; (ii) maintaining, renovating and equipping health-care facilities; (iii) health information system; and (iv) reducing morbidity and mortality among persons deprived of their liberty.

87. As of April 2017, the following activities have been carried out:

- 504 visits by mobile health-care teams, reaching a total population of 17,622 inmates;
- 1,680 civic health days, reaching a total population of 44,696 inmates;
- 18,628 medical and 11,986 dental evaluations;
- Identification of 1,145 inmates who were requested to undergo a forensic medical assessment to determine whether they were suffering from a serious illness making it impossible for them to remain incarcerated. Of these inmates, 525 have been evaluated; 146 have been granted house arrest and 231 are awaiting a judge's decision;
- Implementation of a new matrix to monitor demand for health services and to ensure the follow-up of external service orders, using indicators for the identification of weaknesses and, subsequently, the measurement of response times;
- Since December 2016, the National Prisons Institute, the Consorcio Fondo de Atención en Salud PPL 2017 and the contact centre that authorizes requests for health services have held monthly follow-up meetings to review the management of the process, compare results and agree on activities to improve the process of referral and counter-referral between their areas of responsibility.

4. Mechanisms for the prevention of torture and ill-treatment

88. The Office of the Specialized Ombudsman for Criminal Justice and Prison Policy is implementing an independent complaints mechanism in prisons in order to prevent and address conduct that could be deemed to constitute torture and/or cruel or inhuman treatment. This initiative was implemented during 2017 in the women's prisons in Bogotá and Pereira, in the high- and medium-security prisons in Valledupar and La Dorada and in the medium-security prisons in Cali, Cartagena, Barranquilla, Quibdó and Pereira, in association with the National Prisons Institute.

89. The mechanism was instituted in response to recommendations made by the Committee against Torture concerning the need to implement independent means of enabling persons deprived of their liberty to submit complaints, and in response to the orders issued by the Constitutional Court in its decision T-388 of 2013.

90. The complaints mechanism consists in setting up a number of channels or services through which persons deprived of their liberty can report any events occurring in the prison that might be deemed to be torture and/or cruel or inhuman treatment. The available channels are:

(i) Mailboxes installed in prison yards at certain facilities;

(ii) A telephone number for reporting complaints to the Ombudsman's Office;

(iii) An email address for reporting complaints to the Ombudsman's Office;

(iv) Interviews with persons deprived of their liberty, conducted by the Ombudsman's Office and the Counsel General's Office during inspection visits.

91. The staff of the Office of the Specialized Ombudsman for Criminal Justice and Prison Policy are responsible for installing and administering mailboxes and for the mechanism's databases, which will be shared with the National Prisons Institute and other entities participating in the project. Complaints are collected weekly by officials of the Regional Ombudsman's Office, who review each complaint to determine whether or not it refers to matters of torture or cruel or inhuman treatment. Those that relate to health, food, sentence reduction or other issues are forwarded to the National Prisons Institute or to the competent body, whereas cases of torture or ill-treatment activate the mechanism and are immediately referred to the National Institute of Forensic Medicine and Science so that the appropriate medical examination may be carried out, in accordance with the provisions of the Istanbul Protocol.

92. The Protocol sets out four degrees of consistency between the findings of the medical examination and the acts described by the complainant. Under the mechanism, cases classified as category 1 (not consistent) are transmitted to the National Prisons Institute, while cases classified as category 2, 3 or 4 are referred to the appropriate competent authority (Attorney General's Office, Counsel General's Office). The Ombudsman's Office monitors these cases until such time as the investigation is concluded, irrespective of whether it is ultimately placed on file or results in the punishment of any persons found to be responsible.

93. The initiative for an independent complaints mechanism was preceded by a pilot plan implemented in 2015 at the high-security prison in Valledupar by the Regional Ombudsman's Office, using the same methodology and in compliance with an order of the Constitutional Court. One of the achievements of this pilot plan was that it gave rise to a climate in which officials and persons deprived of their liberty could discuss and learn about the prevention of acts constituting torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, resulting in a significant fall in the number of complaints of such acts.

III. Alleged acts of intimidation, threats or attacks targeting human rights defenders, journalists, trade unionists, judicial officials, lawyers or social or human rights activists

Recommendation in paragraph 39

"39. The State party should redouble its efforts to provide timely, effective protection to human rights defenders, journalists, trade unionists, judicial officials, lawyers and social or human rights activists who are the target of acts of intimidation, threats and/or attacks because of the work that they perform. It should also step up its efforts to ensure that all allegations regarding acts of intimidation, threats or attacks are investigated promptly, thoroughly and impartially, and that the perpetrators stand trial and are held accountable for their acts."

94. The Government remains committed to safeguarding the work of human rights defenders, which it upholds as the natural expression of a democratic and social State governed by the rule of law. Accordingly, in recent years, the Government has fostered a common agenda promoting not only respect for life in Colombia, but also respect for the activity of human rights defenders and social and trade-union leaders.

95. On multiple occasions the Government has reiterated its policy of absolute respect, non-stigmatization and the toning down of hateful language towards human rights defenders and trade unionists, seeking to establish a collaborative and open relationship with those groups. It has repeatedly spoken out against all acts that threaten the life, integrity or freedom of human rights defenders and trade unionists, whose work it supports, and has condemned such acts and called for their investigation by the judicial authorities.

96. The Government strongly condemns all attacks that have targeted social and trade-union leaders and human rights defenders. It has redoubled its efforts in the areas of policing, investigation and protection so that human rights defenders can carry out their work freely. The Minister of the Interior, Guillermo Rivera, has directly addressed this topic, stating: "I recognize and support the work of human rights leaders and defenders."[14]

97. The Government's commitment is evidenced by a workshop it held in Bogotá on 22 February 2017 on promoting and protecting the work of human rights defenders in Colombia. The workshop, which was attended by the Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Mr. José de Jesús Orozco, was intended to provide a forum for inter-institutional dialogue and debate on the progress made and challenges faced by Colombia's State institutions in promoting and safeguarding the work of human rights defenders.

1. Institutional coordination initiatives

A. National Safeguards Process

98. The Government has introduced a National Safeguards Process consisting of the National Committee on Safeguards[15] for Human Rights Defenders and Social and Community Leaders, the technical subgroups on protection and investigation, ceremonies to honour the work of human rights defenders and a national communication strategy.

99. A meeting of the Antioquia Regional Committee on Safeguards was held on 26 January 2017, pursuant to a 2016 decision by the Minister of the Interior to reactivate the regional committees on safeguards. The meeting was attended by representatives of the Ministry of the Interior, the Office of the Presidential Adviser for Human Rights, the Attorney General's Office, the National Police and local authorities. They held a dialogue with representatives of civil society organizations regarding the crime affecting the region and the strategy of prosecuting those responsible as a means of putting an end to acts of violence against human rights defenders.

100. On 24 February 2017, a ceremony was held in honour of the work of human rights defenders in San José de Apartadó, Antioquia. The then Minister of the Interior, Juan Fernando Cristo, called upon the local authorities to recognize that they must provide State support for human rights defenders through protective measures and policies as a corollary of their duty to respect and protect human rights in general.[16]

B. High-level Panel on Guarantees of Non-repetition[17]

101. The High-level Panel on Guarantees of Non-repetition was established in March 2016 as a response to the increase in threats against human rights defenders, their organizations and various groups and communities. By 24 January 2017, the Minister of the

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[14] Quoted from remarks made by the Minister of the Interior, Guillermo Rivera, at a ceremony held in honour of the citizen watchdog Pedro Durán Franco on 11 August 2017: http://www.mininterior.gov.co/reconozco-y-respaldo-la-labor-de-los-lideres-y-defensores-de-derechos-humanos-ministro-del-interior-guillermo-rivera-en-el-acto-de-reconocimiento-al-veedor-ciudadano-pedro-duran-franco.

[15] A high-level, tripartite body involving the State, civil society and the international community, exclusively dedicated to the development and implementation of measures agreed upon with human rights defenders for enabling the latter to carry out their work freely.

[16] http://www.mininterior.gov.co/sala-de-prensa/galeria-multimedia/acto-de-reconocimiento-la-labor-de-los-defensores-de-derechos-humanos-en-san-jose-de-apartado-antioquia.

[17] The Panel is composed of representatives of the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Defence, the National Police, the Office of the Presidential Adviser for Human Rights, the National Protection Unit, the Attorney General's Office and the Ombudsman's Office. Five representatives of civil society organizations also sit on the Panel and support is provided by the United Nations. Its main functions include monitoring and promoting the investigation of threats against human rights defenders, putting forward preventive measures and providing the necessary protection to safeguard their lives, integrity and liberty and security of person.

Interior had convened the Panel seven times, and the working group had met eight times.[18] The Panel has looked into the killings of social leaders in the Departments of Cauca and Nariño, focusing on the investigatory work carried out by the Attorney General's Office in conjunction with the National Police. It has also coordinated the work of the Attorney General's Office with that of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to ensure that information on cases involving human rights defenders and social leaders is shared and that criteria for launching an investigation are harmonized.

102. After its latest meeting, the Panel publicly denounced the threats and killings that have targeted a number of social leaders in the country. State institutions reiterated their commitment to taking all measures necessary to protect the life of every Colombian citizen. Such measures include guaranteeing protection for social leaders and expediting the conduct of investigations to identify and prosecute those responsible.

C. Unified command post

103. In view of the importance of coordinating government efforts to protect the life and integrity of human rights defenders, and as a key component of the effective implementation of the peace agreements, a unified command post was set up in December 2016 to monitor and analyse attacks against human rights defenders and social leaders.

104. The command post is led by the Ministry of Defence, with the participation of the Office of the President of the Republic, the Ministry of the Interior, the Office of the Presidential Adviser for Human Rights, the General Command of the Armed Forces, the National Police, the Attorney General's Office and the National Protection Unit.

105. By February 2017, the unified command post had held 11 national meetings and 3 regional meetings in the departments with the highest number of alleged homicides of human rights defenders: Cauca, Antioquia and Norte de Santander. The unified command post will also continue to meet at the local level to coordinate prevention and protection strategies with local authorities.

106. According to information provided by the unified command post, progress has been made in the legal proceedings associated with 24 of the cases reported by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Four cases have resulted in conviction and 37 persons have been arrested for attacks on human rights defenders.

107. The security forces work closely with the Attorney General's Office to identify and apprehend all perpetrators of homicides, threats and attacks, regardless of their leadership status or political affiliation. They do everything they can to maintain order in areas where criminal activities are resurgent, tackling organized crime that undermines safety and peacebuilding and adopting various measures in the areas of crime prevention and territorial control.

108. As part of its strategic plan, the General Command of the Armed Forces has decided to focus military and police efforts on 160 priority municipalities that together account for 28 per cent of all recorded homicides of human rights defenders. As at 23 February 2017, 64 homicides had been recorded in 2016 and 10 had been recorded in 2017.

109. Pamphlets and threats that represent a disturbance to the peace have begun to circulate. The National Police has analysed them to determine where they come from and whether they represent a real threat.

D. National Commission on Security Guarantees under the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace

110. Through Decree No. 154 of 3 February 2017, the Government established the National Commission on Security Guarantees pursuant to the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, signed by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army. The Commission provides the institutional basis for

[18] The working group sets the agenda of the Panel's meetings and prepares and monitors the topics to be covered. The group is made up of representatives of the bodies that participate in the Panel.

the implementation of section 3, regarding security guarantees and action against criminal organizations and activities that are responsible for homicides and massacres perpetrated against human rights activists or social or political movements, or that threaten those who participate in the implementation of the agreements and peacebuilding, including criminal organizations that have been identified as paramilitary successor groups and their support networks. The Commission was inaugurated on 23 February 2017.

111. The Commission, which will meet once a month, was set up to plan and monitor public and criminal justice policies on the dismantling of any organization or conduct covered by the Final Agreement that threatens the implementation of the Agreement or peacebuilding. The Commission will be chaired by the President of the Republic and will also be composed of the Minister of the Interior, the Minister of Defence, the Minister of Justice and Law, the Attorney General, the Ombudsman, the Counsel General, the Director of the Special Investigation Unit for the dismantling of criminal organizations and activities responsible for homicides and massacres, the General Commander of the Armed Forces, the Director General of the National Police, three recognized experts in the field and two representatives of human rights networks.

E. Elite Peace Corps

112. Pursuant to the Final Agreement, the National Police set up a new, multidimensional Elite Peace Corps. This force brings together National Police capacities in the areas of prevention, prediction, protection and criminal investigation and works together with the Armed Forces, the Attorney General's Office, the National Protection Unit and other institutions. It is the State's front-line response for dismantling criminal organizations that are responsible for homicides, massacres or attacks targeting human rights defenders and social and political leaders.

113. The Elite Peace Corps also combats organizations that have been identified as paramilitary successor groups and tackles any criminal conduct that threatens the implementation of the agreements or peacebuilding.

114. The Elite Peace Corps consists of 1,088 of the country's finest police officers, led by 120 expert criminal investigators and 40 analysts whose comprehensive investigative model is aligned with that of the Attorney General's Office and is aimed at dismantling the criminal organizations and activities responsible for killings of social leaders.

115. The Elite Peace Corps has a quick reaction force comprising 150 members picked from the Special Forces, the National Police Intervention and Counter-Terrorism Unit, the "jungle commandos" and the mobile rifle squadrons.

116. To date, thanks to their collaborative efforts, the National Police and the Attorney General's Office have established the facts in 32 of the 84 homicides committed in 2016 and thus far in 2017, according to United Nations records.

117. The Elite Peace Corps will be supported by the National Coordination Centre, an inter-agency technical unit that will periodically evaluate the Corps' action plans and the impact of its operations. The National Coordination Centre is composed of representatives of the Office of the Vice-President of the Republic, the Office of the Presidential Adviser for Human Rights, the Ministries of Defence, Justice and the Interior, the Armed Forces, the Attorney General's Office, the National Protection Unit and the National Police.

2. Progress made in criminal investigations

118. Through Decree No. 898 of 2017, a Special Investigation Unit was established within the Attorney General's Office, pursuant to section 3.4.4 of the Final Agreement. The Unit has a remit to dismantle criminal organizations and activities that are responsible for homicides and massacres, that attack human rights defenders or social or political movements, or that threaten or attack those who participate in the implementation of the agreements and peacebuilding, including the criminal organizations that have been identified as paramilitary successor groups and their support networks.

119. The Unit will carry out its tasks with the support of:

- 35 district prosecutor's offices, staffed by more than 3,500 prosecutors throughout the country, whose local presence facilitates direct contact with the areas in which events occur;
- A national prosecutors' office specializing in organized crime, with 103 prosecutors working at the national level and 16 working at the local level; and
- A national prosecutors' office specializing in human rights, with 52 prosecutors working at the national level and 57 working at the local level.

120. A strategy of giving priority to the investigation and prosecution of attacks targeting human rights defenders has been implemented over the last six months. The strategy includes a specific action line on dealing with threats, which has had the following outcomes:

(i) At the local level, progress is being made in the implementation of a mechanism for the monitoring and strategic referral of cases on the basis of an understanding of crime not as a collection of individual, isolated events, but rather as the result of a sociopolitical context of violence, taking into account the particular circumstances of each victim through a differentiated approach.

(ii) This new vision opens the door to new ways of thinking about and conducting investigations, through the use of contextual analysis tools such as georeferencing and case association, piecing together the individual circumstances and the bigger picture surrounding each crime and its victim, and identifying the ends sought by those who resort to this particular type of violence.

(iii) Expert prosecutors from the human rights division of the Office of the Prosecutor for Public Safety participate in legal working groups, inspect proceedings and act as supporting prosecutors in high-profile or emblematic investigations.

(iv) Members of a team of prosecutors from the human rights division of the Office of the Prosecutor for Public Safety monitor investigations by participating in legal working groups, inspecting proceedings and acting as supporting prosecutors in high-profile or emblematic investigations.

(v) At the local level, where a strategy of case visits is implemented, every effort is made to ensure that all investigations into threats are overseen by one prosecutor. Furthermore, efforts are made to ensure that a prosecutor is assigned immediately, in the interest of ensuring access to justice and immediate measures of protection.

121. In accordance with this action line on the strategy for investigating attacks on human rights defenders, a protocol is being developed with a view to standardizing procedures for the investigation and prosecution of threats targeting human rights defenders.

122. On 14 June 2017 the Public Legal Service issued Directive No. 002, which sets out guidelines for the effective protection of the rights of human rights defenders and their organizations, members of political movements, and political and social leaders and their organizations. The Directive was issued as part of the authorities' continued efforts to ensure recognition of the important work of human rights defenders.

3. Special measures of protection

123. The Government has a robust programme to protect groups of human rights defenders, including trade union leaders and activists, victims, campesinos, civil society organizations, land claimants, journalists and watchdogs.

124. Of the almost 6,000 persons protected by the National Protection Unit, 3,842 are human rights defenders and social leaders, within the meaning of these terms in United Nations guidance.[19]

125. The National Protection Unit has a budget of over US$ 150 million, which covers the cost of providing human rights defenders with 355 armoured vehicles, 594 standard vehicles, 2,165 bodyguards, 478 river transport subsidies, 486 relocation subsidies, 2,723 bulletproof vests, 3,106 communication devices and 173 emergency alert devices.

126. Protection measures that are tailored to the geographical environment and cultural world view of human rights defenders in rural areas, particularly those in indigenous or Afro-Colombian communities, have been also implemented. These include the provision of maritime and river vessels, domestic animals, special radios, and equipment for indigenous guard units.

127. Please accept the assurances of my highest consideration.

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[19] Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law. Adopted by General Assembly resolution 60/147 of 16 December 2005.